

The Wired Word

Student Handout

Openness About Miscarriage Helps Others

Sunday, October 18, 2020

Due to renovations there are NO Sunday classes this week.

You may however wish to use this week's lesson for personal study, small group study, and/or with your Abide Group.

*All Sunday classes resume next week, **Sunday, October 25 at 9:00am.***

Dear Class Member,

When model and author Chrissy Teigen miscarried recently, she shared that information and her grief on social media, and many others who have had similar losses found that helpful in their ongoing grief. October is Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Month, and Teigen's loss gives us an opportunity to raise our awareness of this matter that in the past was often not discussed. And, as always, we will seek some insight from the Bible on such losses. So that will be the topic of our next class.

During this time of social distancing to control the spread of the virus, *The Wired Word* is including in the TWW student version the full lesson, with all the biblical commentary and additional discussion suggestions normally available only in the teacher's version.



Chrissy Teigen's Openness About Her Miscarriage Helps Others

The Wired Word for the Week of October 18, 2020

In the News

Model and cookbook author Chrissy Teigen, 34, recently revealed on social media that she had miscarried, losing the child, a son, that she and husband, the singer John Legend, 41, had been eagerly awaiting to join their family, which includes two other children.

"Driving home from the hospital with no baby," Teigen wrote on Twitter. "How can this be real."

Miscarriage, the spontaneous loss of a pregnancy before the 20th week, is far more common than the usual lack of discussion about it might lead us to believe. According to the Mayo Clinic, about 10 to 20 percent of known pregnancies end in miscarriage, and the "actual number is likely higher because many miscarriages occur so early in pregnancy that a woman doesn't realize she's pregnant."

Another reason the actual number of pregnancies ending in miscarriage isn't known is because until recently, many families said little about such losses and bore their grief in silence. A kind of social taboo about discussing the loss was common.

TWW team member Joanna Loucky-Ramsey said that her mother was one of nine children, but that she was vaguely aware that there was a 10th child, whose gender she never knew, either because it was a stillborn or miscarried infant. "In those days, such things were not openly discussed," Loucky-Ramsey said. Her grandmother "was certainly busy enough with a farm and nine children to raise, but still, my mother was at least aware of a hidden sorrow that Grandma bore."

Some of this silence was because of shame -- with women feeling that somehow they had caused the spontaneous end of their pregnancy. But according to the Mayo Clinic, it is rarely true that the woman did anything wrong. Most of the time, miscarriage is due to some mishap of biology. "Most miscarriages occur because the fetus isn't developing normally," says the Mayo Clinic.

Today, the silence about miscarriages is giving way. Teigen and Legend are among several celebrities who have spoken out in recent years about pregnancy loss. Others include former first lady Michelle Obama, singers Beyoncé and Celine Dion, actresses Brooke Shields and Kirstie Alley and actors Hugh Jackman and James Van

Der Beek.

What's more, October is Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Month.

Jennifer Handt is a writer who has had six miscarriages. In her article for *Cognoscenti* (on the WBUR site in the list below) she said she identified with Teigen's loss. "I've sat in that same place, and the heartbreak of the moment is nearly impossible to put into words," she said.

Handt commented that Teigen's willingness to speak of her lost pregnancy shows "what happens when women are given the space to speak their truth. Some ask why [Teigen] shares so much; the better question is, why wouldn't she? Because she has spoken up, she and her ... family are now swimming in the kind of solidarity and propping up that follows tragedy, from ... generally good people who do, in fact, still exist in droves. They will get what they need to make it to their first next day that doesn't feel like a living nightmare. They will hear from others who made it through this kind of loss alive."

The help goes both ways. Patricia Walters-Fischer is one who read Teigen's sad news. Though it's been nearly 20 years since Walters-Fischer suffered a miscarriage at 19 weeks, Teigen's post still offered her some comfort.

"It's not just today that the loss happens," Walters-Fischer told *USA Today*. "She will remember the birthday ... We plan that child's life to the age of 18 ... Those moments continue to mentally happen."

Walters-Fischer also said that Teigen's story will help women who are struggling with blaming themselves after a devastating loss.

Teigen and Legend had learned earlier that the child in the womb was a boy. After the miscarriage, Teigen wrote on Instagram, "We are shocked and in the kind of deep pain you only hear about, the kind of pain we've never felt before. We were never able to stop the bleeding and give our baby the fluids he needed, despite bags and bags of blood transfusions. It just wasn't enough," she said.

"We never decide on our babies' names until the last possible moment after they're born, just before we leave the hospital," she added. "But we, for some reason, had started to call this little guy in my belly Jack. So he will always be Jack to us. Jack worked so hard to be a part of our little family, and he will be, forever."

More on this story can be found at these links:

[Chrissy Teigen's Openness About Pregnancy Loss Gives Strength to Women in Similar Situations. USA Today](#)
['Grief So Transporting It Feels Almost Sacred': Why Chrissy Teigen's Story Is Helpful to So Many Women. WBUR](#)
[Miscarriage. Mayo Clinic](#)

The Big Questions

1. What do you think is the primary emotion parents experience when a *wanted* pregnancy ends in miscarriage?
2. Is it a good thing that more people are talking openly about the miscarriages they've experienced? Why or why not?
3. How do you think God looks upon a miscarriage? How does he look upon the miscarried individual? How does he look upon the would-be parents?
4. In what ways should congregations and churches minister to people who have had a miscarriage?
5. To the extent you feel comfortable doing so, discuss your own experience with pregnancy loss. Who or what was most helpful and why? Least helpful and why? Did you feel permitted to discuss this with others? Why or why not?

Confronting the News With Scripture and Hope

Here are some Bible verses to guide your discussion:

Genesis 4:25

Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and named him Seth, for she said, "God has appointed for me another child instead of Abel, because Cain killed him." (No context needed.)

Eve and Adam named their third child Seth, which literally means "appointed" (see Eve's statement about his name above). But it is sometimes also associated with "compensation," for it appears that Eve viewed the birth of Seth as compensation from God after the death of her son Abel and the banishment of her son Cain.

TWW team member Rev. Jim Berger tells of counseling a couple whose child was stillborn and of telling them that story about the birth of Seth and the "compensation" meaning of the name. The following year they had a healthy son. Jim heard through one of their friends that they named him Seth.

On the other hand, this angle might not feel healing to some people because each child is unique, and each child has a right to be him- or herself.

Questions: In what sense, if at all, is a subsequent successful pregnancy after a miscarriage a compensation? Can a subsequent child actually make up for a child who did not survive to birth? What about parents who have miscarriages but never a successful pregnancy? What, if anything, might be the Lord's gift to them?

Ecclesiastes 6:3-5 (NASB)

If a man fathers a hundred children and lives many years, however many they be, but his soul is not satisfied with good things and he does not even have a proper burial, then I say, "Better the miscarriage than he, for it comes in futility and goes into obscurity; and its name is covered in obscurity. It never sees the sun and it never knows anything; it is better off than he." (For context, read 6:1-6.)

The Bible does not speak often of miscarriage or stillborn babies, but when it does, it sometimes seems to be in the voice of someone who is not thinking about the disappointment and pain felt by the parents of the miscarried child but rather referencing a miscarried fetus to make a comparison to someone who was born. Here in Ecclesiastes, for example, the writer argues that a person who is not content with life is no better off than someone who is never born.

Or consider Psalm 58:7-8, where a psalmist prays for his enemies to be banished from life "like a woman's stillborn child, let them never see the sun" (CEB).

In contrast to those two biblical writers, Job (3:16-19), in the midst of his suffering, wishes *he* was with the stillborn, never having seen the light of day, but instead being spared the troubles of life.

Questions: Do you think Job, the writer of Ecclesiastes and the psalmist who wrote Psalm 58 ever personally experienced the loss of a child through miscarriage? Why or why not?

Psalm 127:3 (CEB)

No doubt about it: children are a gift from the LORD; the fruit of the womb is a divine reward. (For context, read 127:3-5.)

Luke 1:13

But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will name him John. (For context, read 1:5-20.)

Isaiah 54:4

Do not fear, for you will not be ashamed; do not be discouraged, for you will not suffer disgrace; for you will forget the shame of your youth, and the disgrace of your widowhood you will remember no more. (For context, read 54:1-8.)

As mentioned in the "In the News" section, miscarriage is a natural process, often occurring because the fetus isn't developing normally. Yet some women who miscarry say they feel shame about it, even though they are told by doctors that they did nothing wrong. We offer these three Bible verses together because they perhaps shed some light on the sources of that shame.

The Psalm verse rightly says that children are a gift from God, a "divine reward." But what parents who miscarry can hear from that is they weren't deserving of that gift or reward.

The verse from Luke speaks of a successful pregnancy as an answer to prayer. So does that mean that a miscarriage is because the parents did not pray enough?

The Isaiah verse is from a longer passage where the fallen city of Jerusalem is addressed as if it were a mother who has suffered much loss, but who is now promised redemption by God. In verse 4, God tells this mother/city that when redeemed, she will forget the shame of her youth and the disgrace of her widowhood. Well, assuming a woman has done nothing to hasten her husband's death, why should widowhood be a disgrace? But God is speaking about how a woman might *feel*, rather than about any actual guilt. Likewise, while the "shame of [her] youth" is not specified, it could well refer to what she felt after miscarrying.

Questions: Where do we learn to be ashamed of that which we cannot control? Does picturing a live birth as a reward or an answer to prayer set one up to feel shame when a pregnancy ends through miscarriage? What effect does shame have in helping parents deal with the grief of a miscarriage? Can our own understanding of the Bible lead us, as it did in biblical times, to assume someone's loss must be because they sinned?

Psalm 139:13-16

*For it was you who formed my inward parts;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.
I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Wonderful are your works; that I know very well.
My frame was not hidden from you,
when I was being made in secret,
intricately woven in the depths of the earth.
Your eyes beheld my unformed substance.
In your book were written
all the days that were formed for me,
when none of them as yet existed.*
(No context needed.)

Here, a psalmist sings praises for God's care for him while still *in utero*, and for God determining for that individual the days of his or her life.

We can understand this to mean that God has the same care for those in the womb whose allotment of days does not extend beyond the womb.

Question: What reasons do we have to assume that miscarried fetuses remain with God? (See Ezekiel 18:4.)

For Further Discussion

1. Read the information from the Mayo Clinic in the links list above titled "Miscarriages." Then discuss together what does and what does not cause them.
2. For more information about Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Month, [visit this site](#).
3. Respond to this, from a TWW team member: "We lost our first two children through miscarriages. Not at all a fun time, and harder on the mother than the father. I don't recall a sense of shame ever. The lack of an expected blessing can come across as a feeling of being cursed, which is not reality, but it still can feel that way. I think that a more prominent feeling, however, is guilt. Although almost never based on facts, the sense of 'what did I do wrong?' can be very powerful and debilitating. The overall strongest feeling is probably sadness, which can easily slide into depression and worry."

Responding to the News

Jennifer Handt, the woman who has had six miscarriages, offers three pieces of advice in the closing paragraphs of [this article](#). Read them, and decide how you might apply them when someone you know miscarries, has a stillbirth, or loses a child following birth.

Prayer

Into your hands, O Lord, we commit all those who do not survive till birth or die shortly thereafter. Be present with comfort and hope to the grieving parents and other family members. In the name of the Good Shepherd.
Amen

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